



THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND WHY SERIAL KILLERS COMMIT HOMICIDE

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ABSTRACT

Serial killers have been a source of great fascination for researchers, as there is much to be explored in terms of the psychological and environmental factors that influence such motives to kill. Mental illness has long been suggested as a potential cause, though it remains unclear whether mental illness or nurture plays more of a role in creating these individuals. Research into serial killers continues to provide insight into this dark subject matter, with an aim towards understanding why people become so violent and how their behaviour can be prevented from occurring again. This topic focuses on assisting an interested reader on the thought process of how an offender may think in the moment of the crime and re-establish an understanding as to why the individual resorted to murder, and to bring emphasis to the factors that led up to the offender's own choice to commit such a heinous crime.

KEYWORDS: Serial Killers, Mental Disorder, Sadistic Personality Disorder, Schizophrenia.

INTRODUCTION

Serial killers are some of the most notorious and feared criminals in our society, yet what motivates them to commit such heinous acts remains unknown. The motivations behind serial killing vary widely from case to case, but there are a few commonalities among the perpetrator that can be observed. Among most cases, mental disorders are a key factor which are responsible for why serial killers are to be motivated to commit homicide, and why they gain the desire to do so. These mental disorders commonly deviate from sadistic personality disorder, anti-social personality disorder to schizophrenia. The research of how mental disorders influence a serial killer's motives aids with the investigations of crime cases, and with providing ethical treatment and rehabilitation to homicide offenders with mental disorders.

Material & Methods

Extensive secondary research was undertaken to assimilate various results of studies on mental disorders along with and serial killers. Secondary qualitative research has been conducted to investigate individuals with such mental disorders and how their motivations may relate to serial killers.

Discussion & Results

Distinct types of mental disorders can have a profound impact on the motives of serial killers, as recent studies show that checking from a record of over 1500 individuals who committed homicide, "34% had a mental disorder" (Cambridge University Press, 2018). This reinforces the facts that mental disorders have a certain amount of responsibility into why individuals with these disorders resort to committing murder. Despite the effects of these mental illnesses, not every person diagnosed with them are bound to commit homicide or other offenses. Regardless of the fact that several serial killers can be diagnosed with the same mental disorder, their choice of the victim may vary from one to another, as different people have diverse types of appeal and attractiveness to the offender such as the body type, gender, and race.

Mental Disorders & Their Effects

One of such mental disorders, is Schizophrenia. Schizophrenia is a mental disorder that affects how an individual perceives reality, experiences emotions, and behaves. It is characterized by delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech and behaviour patterns. Symptoms of schizophrenia can range from mild to severe depending on the individual's condition. The most common symptoms include hearing voices that are not real (auditory hallucinations), having false beliefs about oneself or others (delusions) and exhibiting abnormal social behaviours such as avoiding eye contact or talking to oneself in public places.

The effects of schizophrenia on serial killers can vary greatly depending on the severity of their illness. For certain individuals such as David Berkowitz, he claimed of having delusions of a demon manifesting in his neighbour's dog, which commanded him to take part in the murder of 8 people. In some cases, individuals with this disorder may become violent due to their distorted perception of reality which could lead them to commit murder without understanding its consequences fully. There have been instances where schizophrenic serial killers were able to control their impulses better than those without the disorder leading experts believe it helps them plan out murders more precisely before committing them.

Schizophrenia develops over time through genetic predisposition combined with

environmental factors such as stressors like traumatic events during childhood or adolescence which cause changes in brain chemistry resulting in psychotic episodes for individuals affected by this mental health issue later down the line. Early diagnosis and treatment options like psychotherapy, medication, lifestyle modifications etc., are available for people suffering from Schizophrenia so they can live healthier lives despite being afflicted with this condition. Other serial killers who were diagnosed with Schizophrenia are Ed Gein, Richard Chase and David Gonzalez.

Another common type of mental disorder that influences an individual's motivation to become homicidal is Sadistic Personality Disorder. Sadistic Personality Disorder (SPD) is a serious mental health disorder that affects an individual's desire to deem control over others. It is characterized by a prevalent pattern of sadistic and cruel behaviour. People with sadistic personality disorder often have behaviour patterns consisting of taking pleasure in others' demise such as through openly humiliating and shaming people with others being present and often restricting the freedom of others.

The effects of sadistic personality disorder can manifest itself in various ways including physical aggression and psychological manipulation. It has been found to be more common among serial killers than other populations due to their need for power and control over victims. The development of this disorder may be caused by environmental factors such as childhood trauma or abuse or it could also have biological components with genetic predispositions playing a role in its onset. The effects of Sadistic Personality Disorder can include impaired relationships with family members, difficulty maintaining employment, social isolation from peers due to fear-inducing behaviour patterns, violent tendencies towards animals or humans when provoked even slightly and an overall lack of empathy for those around them which makes rehabilitation difficult if not impossible depending on the severity of symptoms present.

Environmental Factors

As well known, Mental Disorders are not the only factor as to why serial killers resort to killing, as the type of environment the offender was born in has an impact to their future motives. Serial killers often have a history of childhood abuse, insecurity, and rejection. These experiences can lead to a deep-seated need for control over others that ultimately leads them to resorting to homicide in order to feel better about themselves. As studies have shown, severe brain trauma and "traumatic experiences results in increased risks to mental health" (Goodcenter, n.d.). Many serial killers experienced physical or sexual abuse as children, which created feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness. This trauma has been linked with an increase in criminal behaviour later on in life; some believe it is the primary factor leading individuals down the path towards becoming a killer. Additionally, many serial killers were rejected by their peers or family members during their formative years due to mental illness or other issues; this further contributes towards creating an internal sense of isolation and despair which may manifest itself as violent outbursts against those they perceive as wronging them. Insecurity is also another major contributing factor when it comes understanding why someone might become a serial killer; feeling inadequate compared with others around you can create intense feelings of rage that are difficult for people who lack proper coping mechanisms - such as therapy - to manage without turning into violence directed at innocent victims instead. For these individuals committing homicide becomes an outlet through which they can temporarily regain control over their lives while confirming them-

selves by dominating another person's body and mind. Ultimately, years spent enduring child abuse, insecurity, and rejection all contribute significantly towards making killing seem like one possible solution for dealing with overwhelming emotions that would otherwise be too much to handle alone.

Controlling Urges

Mental illness is a major contributing factor to why some people become serial killers. Mental illnesses such as psychosis, depression and anti-social personality disorder have been proven to be able to lead to engaging in more violent acts and the urge to kill; this is due to the lack of impulse control associated with these conditions and the supposed pleasure gained from doing so. People with these mental illnesses may be unable to control their urges due to an inability or difficulty in recognizing right from wrong, or because of distorted thinking caused by their condition. In many cases, those who suffer from mental illness are not able to handle enough mentally or emotionally the pressure of living in society without help and support. This lack of support often leads them down darker paths that can result in violence towards others including murder which could then lead them on a path toward becoming a serial killer if they continue killing multiple victims over time. Not everyone with a mental illness will have an urge to kill, this is largely dependent on the severity of their condition, it is also influenced by how well certain individuals can hold themselves back. It's important for individuals suffering from any kind of serious psychological issues seek out professional help before things get worse for themselves and those around them. With proper treatment, medication management plans and therapy sessions most people suffering from serious psychological issues can learn how to manage their symptoms more effectively instead of turning into someone capable of committing horrific acts like murder repeatedly over time.

Conclusion

Mental illnesses indefinitely have an involvement in the motives of a serial killer. Mental Disorder distorts the ways an individual views the world, such as by provoking hallucinations and delusions, or by altering the activities that an individual would take pleasure in taking part, which may provoke individuals to commit homicide. These mental disorders can bring harm and discomfort to those who surround an individual diagnosed with such disorders. Individuals who face abuse as a child, suffer from the feeling of being isolated and forgotten, resulting in those individuals having violent outbursts. In conclusion, most serial killers either suffer from severe trauma as a child, or have a mental disorder, which affects their motives to consist of committing homicide multiple times to certain victims, thus responding to the question of what influences serial killers to be motivated to murder.

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